

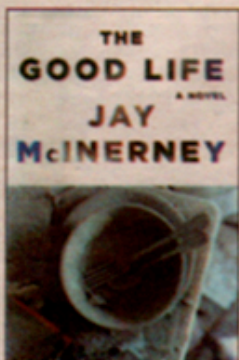
THURSDAY 2/23

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relations

On monsters, plagues, and dirty old drunks

Second Act

Shortly before his world collapsed, James Frey wrote the following about Jay McInerney in his Amazon.com review of *The Good Life*: "In New York, he has remained a highly visible public figure. ... Outside of New York, many people seem to have forgotten him."



Often, when I bring up his later works, people respond with something along the lines of — I didn't know he wrote anything after *Bright Lights*. This is interesting for two reasons: 1) It foreshadows Frey's current predicament — will he fall into obscurity? Does he have another best-seller in him? Will they ever make that damn movie? 2) He's not lying! Although McInerney lost much of his fame after the 1980s, he looms large in literary circles, living a life that echoes many of those in *The Good Life*, his most recent book. In the novel, McInerney takes two groups of people —

the Wall Street superrich and the publishing elite — plunks them down just shy of 9/11, and lets us see how the attack affects them. Some consider having affairs or moving out of the city; others try to look busy at a makeshift soup kitchen; and all wonder what the hell to do about their kids, who grow up just so fast in New York. Frey calls *The Good Life* McInerney's best book since *Bright Lights*, and he may just be right.

McInerney appears at 7 p.m. at A Clean Well-Lighted Place for Books, 601 Van Ness (at Golden Gate), S.F. Admission is free; call 441-6670 or visit www.bookstore.com.

— MICHAEL LEAVERTON

It's Not Fair

Some artists get all the talent

I'll say it quickly before I chicken out: Mitsy Ávila Ovalles is severely brilliant. Someone needs to give her a ton of money so she can keep painting, or we'll all lose. It's hard not to hate people this talented, but I'm doing my best. It just doesn't seem fair for her to have such an ethereally beautiful way with lonesome mariachis, bits of food wrapper, and owls, while I have nothing. She habitu-



Art from "Mind Maps."

ally produces images layered with glowing washes that drip over piecemeal figures (sometimes just feet, sometimes the head of Fernando Valenzuela). An infallible sense of composition grounds her irreverent takes on little things that might be sacred. Ruination glows from behind darkened faces. In short, her canvases are a joy to behold. Grrr. Ovalles' work shows in the exhibition "Mind Maps," along with that of seven other talented young artists, including Diana Sanchez, Hector Dio Mendoza, and Ana Fernandez.

An opening reception for "Mind Maps" starts at 7:30 p.m. (and the exhibit continues through April 22) at Galería de la Raza, 2857 24th St. (at Bryant), S.F. Admission is free; call 826-8009 or visit www.galeriadelaraza.org.

— HIYA SWANHUYSER

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